

In the Claims:

1. – 6. (Cancelled)
7. (New) A nucleic acid comprising nucleotides 1-531 of SEQ ID NO:3.
8. (New) A nucleic acid comprising nucleotides 1-1344 of SEQ ID NO:3.
9. (New) A nucleic acid encoding amino acids 1-177 of SEQ ID NO:4 wherein at least one of the codons encoding Arg at amino acid positions 3, 5 and 6 of SEQ ID NO:4 is CGT.
10. (New) The nucleic acid of claim 9 wherein each of the codons encoding Arg at amino acid positions 3, 5 and 6 of SEQ ID NO:4 is CGT.
11. (New) A nucleic acid encoding SEQ ID NO:4 wherein at least one of the codons encoding Arg at amino acid positions 3, 5 and 6 of SEQ ID NO:4 is CGT.
12. (New) The nucleic acid of claim 11 wherein each of the codons encoding Arg at amino acid positions 3, 5 and 6 of SEQ ID NO:4 is CGT.
13. (New) A method for the production of an NK polypeptide comprising the α -chain of hepatocyte growth factor polypeptide or an N-terminal fragment thereof comprising the steps of
 - a) expressing the nucleic acid of any one of claims 7-12 in a microbial host cell;
 - b) isolating inclusion bodies containing said NK polypeptide in denatured form;
 - c) solubilizing the inclusion bodies; and
 - d) renaturing the denatured NK polypeptide.